A 000 672 519 6
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

FRONTIER BALLADS

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON

CACTUS

By Ridgely Smith

A STRANGER sat and listened to
A Cactusite, named Slade,
Discourse upon the progress which
That small cowtown had made.

He sat plumb still, attentive,
In the famed Gold Strike Saloon,
And listened to the blowing that
Had gone on since that noon.

"We've made th' desert bloom," one said.
Another said, "You're right!
Our town has stores and stables,
Boardwalk streets, electric lights."

"Our town corrals are han'somer
Than any on the range."
"Our women are all beautiful!"
"Our dogs ain't got no mange!"

"We win in every rodeo.
Jed's store is full o' cups.
Our town has *had* the downs, and now
For years we've had the ups."

It now was night in Cactus,
The town they blowed about,
And the stranger thought the time had come
To speak up or get out.

"I ain't been here so very long.
I'm just a plain cowhand.
But I kin see you all are *right;*
This dump is just plumb grand.

"You're leaders in all cowtown things;
You win at every sport.
But still this town ain't perfect yet.
It should be a seaport."

They gasped, and shouted things at him:
"Impossible! You're mad!
There ain't no sea out hereabouts!
But sartin we'll be glad

"Ef you kin tell us how to make
This place a seaport town."
The stranger stood; held up his hand.
The Cactusites sat down.

"Just lay a pipeline, boys," he said,
"As fast as you can go.
Don't stop until you make it reach
The Gulf of Mexico.

"And if you boys can suck just *half*
As well as you can blow,
You'll make this place a seaport town
In five days. That I know!"

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO

FRONTIER BALLADS

Also by Mr. Hanson

With Sully Into the Sioux Lands
Illustrated by John W. Norton.
Crown 8vo $1.50

The Conquest of the Missouri
Profusely Illustrated. Third edition.
Large 8vo . . . . . Net $2.00

A. C. McCLURG & CO., Publishers

FRONTIER BALLADS

by JOSEPH MILLS HANSON

With Pictures in Color
and Other Drawings by
MAYNARD DIXON

CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & Co.
1910

COPYRIGHT
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
1910

Published October 15, 1910

The Publishers' Press
Chicago

DEDICATED TO MY WIFE
FRANCES LEE HANSON

CONTENTS

SOLDIER SONGS

Page

Dakota Militia 15
The Girl of the Yankton Stockade 18
The Ballad of Sergeant Ross 21
The Springfield Calibre Fifty 25
A Garrison Christmas 28
Troop Horses 31
A Khaki Kick 35
Sergeant Noonan Explains 38
Laramie Trail 40

PRAIRIE SONGS

The Call of the Wind 45
The Fur Traders 46
Cowboy Song 52
Christmas Eve at Kimball 54
A Lament 58
Jesus Garcia 60
A Christmas Letter 66
The Coyoteville Peace Meeting 69
The Song of the Winchester 71
Prairie Fire 73

RIVER SONGS

The Missouri 77
The Old Carry 81
Jake Dale 83
The Engineer of the "Golden Hind" 87
The "Pauline" 89
Afterglow 92

MY CREED

NOW, this is the simple, living faith of a humble heart and mind,
Drunk up from the storm-brewed Western streams, breathed in with the prairie wind.
My paints are crude and my pictures rude, but if some worth they show
Which those may see who have thoughts as free, the rest may let them go.

I hold that the things which make earth good may work most harm in use
If the wit of men heed not the line 'twixt temperance and abuse,
For speech or mood, or drink or food may be a curse at will,
Though, rightly weighed, they only aid the cup of life to fill.

I hold that the silent sea and plain, the mountain, wood, and down,
Are better haunts for the feet of men than the streets of the roaring town,
And that those who tread for the price of bread in the thronging hives of toil
Will stronger grow with the more they know of the kiss of the virgin soil.

I hold that our sons should learn to love, not gods of gold and greed,
But the virile men of brain and brawn who served our country's need,
And should more delight in a clean-cut fight, stout blade and courage whole,
That the morbid skill of a critic's drill in the core of a sin-sick soul.

Three stars that shine on the trail of life can make man's path-
way bright,
And one is the strength of the living God, that stands in his
heart upright,
And one is a noble woman's love, on which his heart may lean,
And one is the sight of his country's flag, to keep his courage
keen.

Who knows the balm of the summer's calm or the chords of the
blizzard's hymn
And finds not God in blast and breeze, his sense is strangely dim,
For he whose ear is attuned can hear the very planets sing
That the soul of man, by a God-wrought plan, is the heir of
creation's King.

Who feels the joy of the golden days with her who shares his
mood
In the sun-washed wastes of the prairie hills or the breaks of
the tangled wood;
Who has won the fate of a steel-true mate, real comrade, friend
and wife,
He tastes the kiss of Elysian bliss in instant, earthly life.

Who sees the gleam of the Stars and Stripes, on land or sea
displayed,
Atilt in the reek of the battle-smoke or aloft o'er the marts of
trade —
Unless his veins are the sluggish drains for the blood of a craven
race.—
He will gain new life for a better strife, whatever the odds he
face.

So that is the rede and the homely creed of one who has spelled
it forth
In the rivers' sweep and the splendors deep of the stars of the
hardy North;
To some, I ween, it may seem but mean; too short, too blunt,
too plain,
But if those I touch who have felt as much, it will not have been
in vain.

I

SOLDIER SONGS

I

SOLDIER SONGS

DAKOTA MILITIA

(1862)

NO "scare-heads" in big city papers,
No "puffs" in Department reports,
No pictures by "special staff artists"
Of assaults on impregnable forts;

We are far from the war-vexed Potomac,
Our fights are too small to make news;
We are merely Dakota militia,
Patrolling the frontier for Sioux.

Three hundred-odd "empire builders,"
Gathered in from three hundred-odd claims,
Far scattered across the wide prairies
From Pierre to the mouth of the James.

Perhaps they seemed little or nothing,
Our losses, our toil, and our pain,
The rush of the war ponies, tearing
Through cornfields and yellowing grain;

The whoop of the hostile at midnight,
The glare of the flaming log shacks,
A beacon of hate and destruction
As we fled, with the foe at our backs;

Our women and young driven, weeping,
Exhausted, half-naked, afraid,
To the refugee huts of Vermillion
Or the sun-smitten Yankton stockade.

Small things to a Nation embattled,
But great to the pioneer band
Who are blazing the roads of the future
Through the wastes of a wilderness land.

We plod past the desolate coulées
In the sweltering afternoon heat,
While the far ridges shine in a waving blue line
Where the earth and the brazen sky meet.

No sound save the hoofs of the column
As they swish through the dry prairie grass,
No life anywhere save a hawk, high in air,
Gazing down as we wearily pass.

There is never a foe we may grapple
In the heat of a steel-clashing fray,
For the quarry we hunt is a shadow in front
That flits, and comes never to bay;

A feather of smoke to the zenith,
The print of a hoof in the sod,
A shot from the grass where the far flankers pass
Sending one more poor comrade to God.

Would we rest when the day's work is over
And the stars twinkle out in the sky?
There is double patrol round the lean water-hole
And the picketed horses hard by.

Breast-down in the rain-rutted gully,
With muskets clutched close in our hands,
The hours of night drag their heavy-winged flight
Like Eternity's slow falling sands.

While the Great Dipper, pinned to the Pole Star,
Swings low in the dome of the North
And, faint through the dark, sounds the prairie wolf's bark
Or a snake from the weeds rustles forth.

And the darkness that chokes like a vapor
Is thronged with the visions which come
Of children and wife and the dear things of life
That peopled the lost cabin home.

Till the East flushes red with the morning
And the dawn-wind springs fresh o'er the plain,
And the reveille's note from the bugle's clear throat
Calls us up to our labors again.

We were not in the fight at Antietam,
We never have seen Wilson's Creek,
We were guiding our trains over Iowa's plains
While the shells at Manassas fell thick,

But we're waging a war for a new land
As the East wages war for the old,
That the mountains and plains of the red man's domains
May be brought to Columbia's fold,

And though only a squad of militia
That the armies back East never knew,
We are playing a game which is largely the same
With the truculent, turbulent Sioux.

THE GIRL OF THE YANKTON STOCKADE

YES, it's pretty, this town. And it's always been so;
We pioneers picked it for beauty, you know.
See the far-rolling bluffs; mark the trees, how they hide
All its streets, and, beyond, the Missouri, bank-wide,
Swinging down through the bottoms. Up here on the height
Is the college. Eh, sightly location? You're right!

It has grown, you may guess, since I've been here; but still
It is forty-five years since I looked from this hill
One morning, and saw in the stockade down there
Our women and children all gathered at prayer,
While we, their defenders, with muskets in rest
Lay waiting the Sioux coming out of the West.

They had swept Minnesota with bullet and brand
Till her borders lay waste as a desert of sand,
When we in Dakota awakened to find
That the red flood had risen and left us behind.
Then we rallied to fight them,— Sioux, Sissetons, all
Who had ravaged unchecked to the gates of Saint Paul.

Is it strange, do you think, that the women took fright
That morning, and prayed; that men, even, turned white
When over the ridge where the college now looms
We caught the first glitter of lances and plumes
And heard the dull trample of hoofs drawing nigh,
Like the rumble of thunder low down in the sky?

Such sounds wrench the nerves when there's little to see;
It seemed madness to stay, it was ruin to flee.
But, handsome and fearless as Anthony Wayne,
Our captain, Frank Ziebach, kept hold on the rein,
Like a bugle his voice made us stiffen and thrill —
"Stand steady, boys, steady! And fire to kill!"

So the most of us stayed. But when dangers begin
You will always find some who are yellow within.
We had a few such, who concluded to steer
For the wagon-train, parked in the centre and rear.
They didn't stay long! But you've heard, I dare say,
Of the girl who discouraged their running away.

What, no? Never heard of Miss Edgar? Why, sir,
Dakota went wild with the praises of her!
As sweet as a hollyhock, slender and tall,
And brave as the sturdiest man of us all.
By George, sir, a heroine, that's what she made,
When her spirit blazed out in the Yankton stockade!

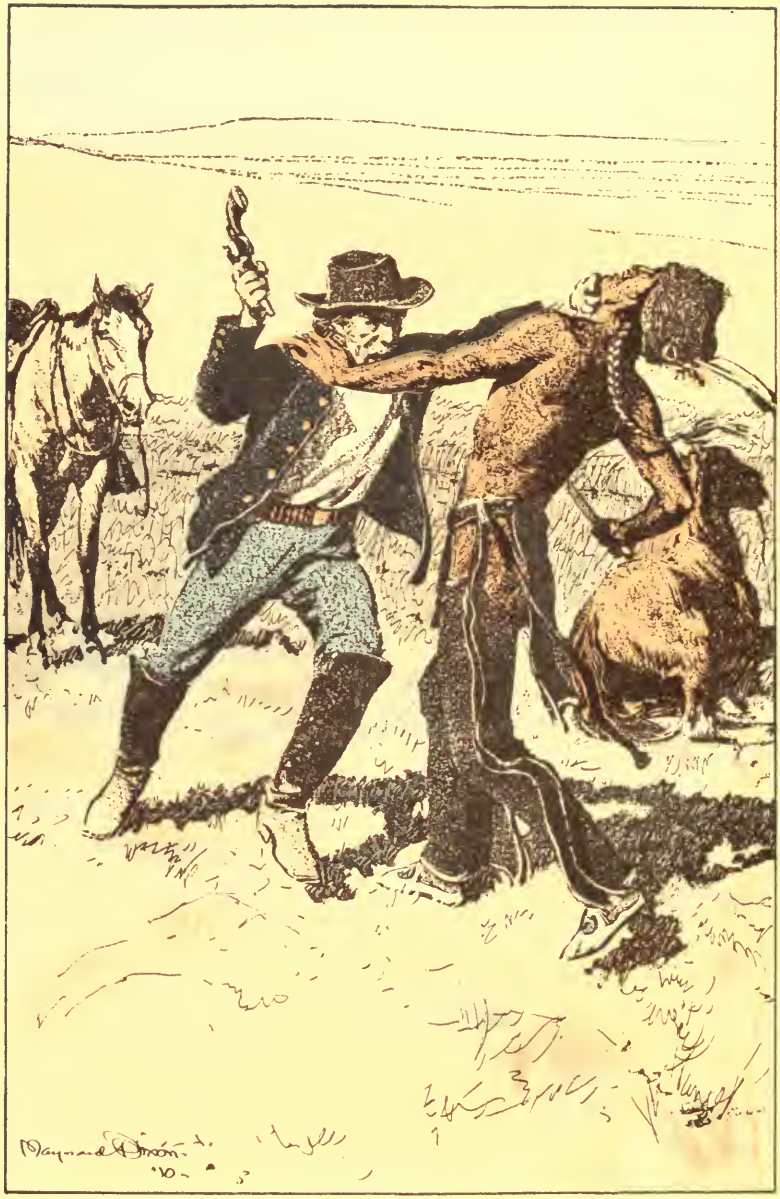
The women were sobbing, for every one knew
She must blow out her brains if the redskins broke through,
When into their midst, fairly gasping with fright,
Came the panic-struck hounds who had fled from the fight.
They trampled the weak in their blind, brutal stride,
Made straight for the wagons and vanished inside.

Then up rose Miss Edgar in anger and haste
And grasped the revolver that hung at her waist;
She walked to the wagon which nearest her lay,
She wrenched at the back-flap and tore it away,
Then aiming her gun at the fellow beneath
She held it point-blank to his chattering teeth.

"Go back to your duty," she cried, "with the men!
Go back, or you'll never see sunrise again!
Do you think, because only the women are here,
You can skulk behind skirts with your dastardly fear?
Get out on the ground. Take your gun. About, face!
And don't look around till you're back in your place!"

Well, he minded; what's more, all the others did, too.
That girl cleared the camp of the whole scurvy crew,
For a pistol-point, hovering under his nose,
Was an argument none of them cared to oppose.
Yet so modest she was that she colored with shame
When the boys on the line began cheering her name!

Well, that's all; just an echo of old border strife
When the sights on your gun were the guide-posts of life.
Harsh times breed strong souls, by eternal decree,
Who can breast them and win — but it's always struck me
That the Lord did an extra good job when He made
Miss Edgar, the girl of the Yankton stockade.



THE BALLAD OF SERGEANT ROSS

THE south wind's up at the break of dawn
From the dun Missouri's breast,
It has tossed the grass of the Council Hill
And wakened the flames on its crest;

The flames of the sentry fires bright,
Ablaze on the prairies pale,
Where sixty men of the Frontier Corps
Are guarding the Government Trail.

A rattle of hoofs from the northern hills,
A steed with a sweat-wrung hide
And Olaf Draim, of the Peska Claim,
Swings off at the captain's side.

A limb of the sturdy Swedes is he,
Marauders in days of old,
But the swart of his face is stricken white
And the grip of his hand is cold.

"Now, hark ye, men of the Frontier Corps,
I ride from the Beaver Creek,
Where I saw a sight at the grim midnight
That might turn a strong man weak.

"Chief Black Bear's out from the Crow Creek lands,
The buzzards his track have showed;
Last eve he pillaged at Old Fort James,
To-day on the Firesteel road,

"And Corporal Stowe, of the Frontier Corps,
On furlough to reap his grain,
At the Peska stage-house lieth dead
With his wife and his children twain."

Then up and spoke First Sergeant Ross,
Who had bunked with Corporal Stowe:
"By the glory of God, they shall pay in blood
The debt of that dastard blow!

"Ye know the path to the Crow Creek lands;
It is sown with this spawn of hell,
And there's deep ravine and there's plum-hedge green
To shelter a foeman well.

"Now, who of my comrades mounts with me
For a murdered mess-mate's wrong,
That the Sioux who rides with those scalps at his side
May swing from a hempen thong?"

Of three-score men there were only ten
Would gird for that chase of death.
Quoth Ross: "As ye please. For the cur, his fleas,
But men for the rifle's breath."

They have tightened cinches and passed the lines
Ere the lowland mists have flown;
The men are astride of the squadron's best,
And Ross, of the Captain's roan.

They ride till the crickets have sought the shade;
They ride till the sun-motes glance;
And they have espied on a far hillside
The whirl of the Sioux scalp-dance.

Then it's up past the smouldering stage-house barn
And out by the well-curb's marge;
The Sioux are a-leap for the tether-ropes:—
"Revolvers! Guide centre! Charge!"

The Sioux, they flee like a wild wolf-pack
At the flick of the shot-tossed sod,
Six braves have lurched to the fore fetlocks
And two of the Sergeant's squad.

But Ross has tightened his sabre-belt
And given the roan his head,
And set his pace for a single chase,
A furlong's length ahead.

He has set his pace for the chief, Black Bear,
Who shrinks from a strong man's strife
But flaunts in the air the long, brown hair
Of the scalp of the Corporal's wife.

The eight, they follow like swirled snow-spume,
A-drive o'er an ice-bound bar,
But the redskin's track is the dim cloud-wrack
That streams in the sky afar.

They ride till the hearts of their steeds are dead
And they gallop with lolling tongues,
And the tramp of their feet is a rhythmic beat
To the sob of their panting lungs.

And two are down in a prairie draw
And three on a chalk-stone ledge,
And three have won to the Bon Homme Run
And stuck in the marsh-land sedge.

But Black Bear's horse still holds the course,
Though her breath is a thick-drawn moan,
And a length behind is the straining stride
Of the Captain's steel-limbed roan.

The Sergeant rides with a loose-thrown rein,
Nor sabre nor shoot will he
Till the pony has pitched at a gopher mound
And flung her rider free;

And Ross has wrenched the knife from his hand
And smitten him to the ground: —
"Did ye think to win to the Bijou Hills,
Ye whelp of a Blackfoot hound?

"I had riddled your carcass this six miles back
And left ye to rot on the plain,
Had the blood of the slaughtered not called on me
That I hail ye to Peska again,

"To point this lesson to all your tribe,
That the price of a white man's soul
No longer goes, in the mart of death,
Unpaid to its last dark goal.

"Wherefore, that your tribesmen may see and feel
The cost of a white man's wrong,
And to sweeten the rest of my mess-mate's kin,
Ye shall swing from a hempen thong."

He has slung the chief to the saddle-bow,
Triced up in his own raw-hide,
And has borne him back to the stage-house yard,
All bleak on the green hillside.

And they swung him at dawn from a scaffold stout,
As a warning to all his kind,
To fatten the birds and to scare the herds
And to sport with the prairie wind.

THE SPRINGFIELD CALIBRE FIFTY

I WAS wrought of walnut blocks and rolled rod steel,
I was hammered, lathed, and mandrelled, stock and plate,
I was gauged and tested, bayonet to heel,
Then shipped for service, twenty in a crate.

For I was the calibre fifty,
Hi! — dough-boys, you haven't forgot
The click of my tumblers shifty
And the kick of the butt when I shot?
I was nothing too light on your shoulder,
You were glad when you stacked me o' nights,
But I'd drill an Apach'
From the thousand-yard scratch
If you'd only hold straight on the sights — old sights!
My trusty old Buffington sights!

In oil-soaked chests at Watervliet I've laid,
I have rusted in Vancouver through the rains,
I have scorched on Fort Mohave's baked parade,
And caked with sand at Sedgwick on the plains.

For I led every march on the border,
And I taught every rookie to fight;
Though he'd curse me in close marching order,
Lord!—he'd hug me on picket at night
As he thought of the herd-guard at Buford
When Sitting Bull swooped within reach,
And 'twas every man's life,
It was bullet and knife
Had my cartridges jammed in the breech—lock breech!
In my solid block, hammer-lock breech!

It was I who lashed the Modocs from their lair
With Wheaton in the Tule Lava Bed;
It was I who drove Chief Joseph to despair
When I streaked the slopes of Bear Paw with his dead.

For I was a proof most impressive—
The Springfield the infantry bore—
To redskins with spirits aggressive
That peace is more healthful than war;
I showed them on Musselshell River
And again, yet more plain, at Slim Butte;
They were plucky as sin
But they had to come in
When they found how the Springfield could shoot—
shoot, shoot!
How my blue-bottle barrel could shoot!

I was Vengeance when, with Miles through trackless snow,
The "fighting Fifth" took toll for Custer's fall;
I was Justice when we flayed Geronimo;
I was Mercy to the famished horde of Gall.

Oh, I was slow-plodding and steady;
Not hot, like the carbine, to raid,
But when he found trouble too ready
He was glad of his big brother's aid;
For sometimes he'd scatter the outposts,
Then wait, if the foe proved too stout,
Till, at "Front into line!"
It was business of mine
While the infantry volleyed the rout — rout, rout!
While I cleared out the village in rout!

But those years have sped; long silent are my lips;
Now my sturdy grandson rules the host I knew,
And a drab-clad army trusts his five-shell clips
As of old the blue-clad held my one shot true.

Still, my dotage takes solace of glory
From my turbulent youth and its scenes.
As vivid with valorous story
As the isles of the far Philippines.
Though the steel-jacket smokeless is sovereign
And I'm proud of my name on his crest,
It was black smoke and lead
When the skirmish lines spread
With the Springfield that conquered the West — West,
West!
With the hard-fighting arm of the West!

A GARRISON CHRISTMAS

NOW, all you homesick rookies who are blue on Christmas Day,
Though bunked in pleasant barracks, come listen to my lay!
When you're stationed snug at Flagler, Leavenworth, or Hampton Roads,
Where the postman three times daily brings your Christmas cheer in loads,
What ground have you for kicking? You would glorify your fate
If you'd been in old Fort Buford on Christmas, '68!

Just a bunch of squatty cabins built of cottonwoods and clay
With roofs of sod and sedge-grass and windows stuffed with hay,
And when the winter blizzards came howling overhead
And we couldn't reach the timber, we burned our bunks, instead,
While, camped around the gullies, lay five hundred Sioux in wait:
That's how we stood at Buford on Christmas, '68!

We were out beyond the border a thousand miles or more,
A wilderness of drifting snows behind us and before;
Just a bunch of U. S. doughboys, hollow-eyed from march and fight,
For you bet we all kept busy with Sitting Bull in sight,
And our old buzz-saw he'd captured never let us sleep too late
When he used it as a war-drum around Christmas, '68!

I remember well that morning, it was twenty-four below,
With a bright sun striking crystals from the endless fields of snow.
We had finished with our breakfast of beans and bacon-fat,
When someone cried, "Look yonder, along the bluffs! What's that?"
We looked, then cheered like demons. The mail-guard, sure as fate!
A welcome sight, I tell you, on Christmas, '68!

They ploughed in through the snow-drifts across the barrack-yard,
Their fur caps rimmed with hoar-frost, their horses breathing hard.
They bore orders from headquarters, but we soldiers bade them hail
Because they'd brought us, also, our sacks of Christmas mail.
We had never hoped till springtime to have that precious freight;
Was it strange it raised our spirits on Christmas, '68?

We crowded in a corner around old Sergeant "Jack"—
A Santa Claus in chevrons with a mail-bag for his pack —
And with horse-play, yells, and laughter we greeted every flight
As he called the names and fired them their bundles left and right.
For some there came no tokens, but they kept their faces straight
And smiled at others' fortune on Christmas, '68.

"Tom Flint!" A woollen muffler from his sister back in Maine.
"James Bruce!" His father'd sent him a silver watch and chain.
"Hans Goetz!" A flute and song-book from the far-off Baltic's shore.

"George Kent!" A velvet album from his folks in Baltimore.
And how we cheered the pictures from the girls in every State
To their sweethearts in the army, on Christmas, '68!

"Fred Gray!" A sudden silence fell on that noisy place.
Poor Fred lay in the foot-hills with the snow above his face.
But his bunkie loosed the package of its wrappings, one by one —
'Twas a Bible from his mother, with a blessing for her son.
And the hardest heart was softened as we thought of our dead mate
And that lonely, stricken mother on Christmas, '68.

But the Sergeant raised the shadow as he shouted, "Jerry Clegg!"
In hospital was Jerry with a bullet through his leg —
The gayest lad in Buford —and we plunged out through the drifts
To take his package to him, forgetting our own gifts.
'Twas a green silk vest from Dublin, and, bedad, it sure was great
To hear old Jerry chuckle on Christmas, '68!

Thus it went, with joke and banter —what a romping time we had!
The redskins in the coulées must have thought we'd gone clean mad,
For they started popping bullets at the sentinels on guard
And we had to stop our nonsense, and sortie good and hard.
But that was daily routine — always got it, soon or late —
If we hadn't, we'd felt lonely on Christmas, '68.

So I'm here to tell you rookies who are kicking on your lot
That you don't know service hardship as we got it, served up hot,
For the Philippines are easy and Hawaii is a snap
When compared to fighting Injins over all the Western map.
And, next time you start to growling when your mail's an hour late,
Just recall the boys at Buford, on Christmas, '68!

Raymund Dixon
'10.

TROOP HORSES

OH, you hear a lot these days
Of the automatic ways
That the experts have devised for spillin' gore;
Cycle squadrons, motor vans,
All fixed up on modern plans
For a rapid transit, quick installment war.

Now, that sort of thing may go
When you have a thoughtful foe
Who will stick to graded roads with all his forces,
But when we were boys in blue,
Playing cross-tag with the Sioux,
We were satisfied to get along on horses.

Oh, the horses, sleek and stout
When the squadrons started out,
How they pranced along the column as the bugles blew the "Trot!"
They might weaken and go lame,
But they'd never quit the game,
And they'd bring us back in safety if they weren't left to rot.

When there came a sudden tack
In the travois' dusty track
And we knew the reds were headin' for the timber and the rocks,
With the infantry and trains
Thirty miles back on the plains,
Then the horses were the boys that got the knocks.

Oh, the horses, roan and bay,
Without either corn or hay,
But a little mess o' dirty oats that wouldn't feed a colt;
Who could blame 'em if they'd bite
Through the picket-ropes at night?
When a man or horse is hungry, ain't he bound to try and bolt?

When the trail got light and thin
And the ridges walled us in,
And the flankers had to scramble with their toes and finger-nails,
While the wind across the peaks
Whipped the snow against our cheeks,
Then the horses had to suffer for the badness of the trails.

Oh, the horses, lean and lank,
With the "U. S." on their flank
And a hundred-weight of trumpery a-dangle all around;
How they sweated, side by side,
When the stones began to slide
And they couldn't find a footing or an inch of solid ground.

But they'd stand the racket right
Till the redskins turned to fight
And up among the fallen pines we heard their rifles crack;

Hi! — the three-year vet'rans stormed
While the skirmish lines were formed
At the snub-nosed little carbines that they couldn't fire back!

And the horses, standing there
With their noses in the air —
How they kicked and raised the devil down among the tangled trees!
They didn't mind the shooting,
But they'd try to go a-scooting
When they got a whiff of redskin on the chilly mountain breeze.

Still, I've not a word of blame
For those horses, just the same;
A yelping Injun, daubed with clay, he isn't nice to see.
And I ain't forgot the day
When my long-legg'd Texas bay
Wasn't scared enough of Injuns not to save my life for me.

I was lyin' snug and low
In a hollow full of snow
When the hostiles flanked the squadron from a wooded ridge near by,
And, of course, the boys, at that,
Sought a cooler place to chat,
But they didn't know they'd left me with a bullet in my thigh!

But the redskins understood —
Bet your life they always would! —
And they came a-lopin' downward for this short-hair scalp of mine,
While I wondered how I'd be
"Soldier a la fricassee," . .
For I didn't know my Texan hadn't bolted with the line,

Till I heard a crunchin' sound,
And when I looked around,
With the reins against his ankles, there that blaze-face rascal stood!

He was shiverin' with fright,
But he hadn't moved a mite,
For he'd never learned to travel till I told him that he should.

And he stayed, that Texan did,
Till I'd crawled and rolled and slid
Down beside him in the hollow and the stirrup-strap could find.
And I somehow reached the saddle
And hung on — I couldn't straddle —
While he galloped for the squadron with the Sioux strung out behind.

Oh, the horses from the range,
They've got hearts; it isn't strange
If they raise a little Hades when the drill gets hot and fast;
But I'd like to see a chart
Of the automobile cart
That will save a man on purpose when the shots are singin' past.

Now, the boys in blue, you bet,
Earn whatever praise they get,
But they're not the only ones who never lag,
For the good old Yankee horses,
They are always with the forces
When the battle-smoke is curling round the flag!

And I don't believe the men
Who make drawings with a pen
Can ever build a thing of cranks and wheels
That will starve and work and fight,
Summer, winter, day or night,
Like that same old, game old horse that thinks and feels.

A KHAKI KICK

BACK there in Washington, people may stare,
Easy-chair officers sputter and swear,
Bureaucrats legislate — what do we care?
Down in the ranks we don't follow the styles;
Here's health to the General, Nelson A. Miles!

I've been readin' in the papers and I'm feelin' pretty mad
At the shabby sort of treatment that a game old soldier's had.
And the soldier I'm referrin' to, who's so surprisin' game,
Is Miles, Lieutenant General — I guess you've heard the name?

Now, the pointers that a twelve-year duty sergeant hasn't got
On the secrets of the Service, are a quite extensive lot;
But he may make observations, while a-wearin' out his shoes,
Not just in strict acordance with the War Department's views.

I've seen some bits of service of a somewhat stirrin' brand
When the West was callin' lusty for a civilizin' hand,
And, myself, I've had some practice in that missionary work
With the men who did the business, from the buttes to Albuquerq'.

They've sent some stunnin' strategists, so history records,
To show the noble red man how the Nation loves its wards,
And some was politicians, and some was soft of heart,
And some was full of ginger, but couldn't make a start.

But the man who knew his business as the king-bird knows the hawk;
Who started with the rifle and finished with the talk;
Who wouldn't stop for bluffin' when he once got started right,
Was him I'm tellin' you about — you bet he came to fight!

I know he's no West Pointer — I've a notion, what is more,
That it isn't only Pointers who may know the game of war,
And if he's a little partial to the medals on his chest
He's got a darned good right to be; he earned 'em in the West.

For I've follered him in winter through those blamed Montana snows
When the hills was stiff as granite and the very air was froze,
And seen him ridin' out in front to lead the double-quick
When the lines went into action on the banks of Rosebud Creek.

I've lurched across the Painted Plains, my temples like to burst,
And seen men suckin' out their veins to quench their burnin' thirst,
With the sky a blazin' furnace and the earth a bakin' sea,
And he was there beside us — and was just as dry as we.

Oh, hang these army politics, when jealousy and spite
Can rob a veteran of his praise, his dearest, hard-earned right!
There's just one kind of officer enlisted men can like —
The kind who keeps his bearings when the shots begin to strike.

And that's the kind that Miles has been; he never ducked or flinched;
He was always in the mix-up when the lines of battle clinched;
He's whipped out Rebs and redskins and he's made some Dagos dance,
And he's good for lots more fightin' if he ever gets the chance.
And here's the moral to this talk — I'll ask no price, but thanks:
Miles may not have a stand-in, but he's solid with the ranks!

Back there in Washington, people may stare,
Easy-chair officers sputter and swear,
Bureaucrats legislate — what do we care?
Down in the ranks we don't follow the styles;
Here's a health to the General, Nelson A. Miles!

SERGEANT NOONAN EXPLAINS

"JAMES Noonan, private, 'B' Troop, made sergeant on the field
For leading charge on hostiles, compelling them to yield."
That's the way the record reads, but, sure, it isn't so;
Ye mind, I'm Sergeant Noonan and I guess I ought to know!

I'll tell ye how it happened, dead straight, without no frills.
We'd tracked a Cheyenne war-band clean through the Black-
snake Hills,
Till, on the march one mornin', they jumped us from the right,
Three hundred bucks in war-paint, well armed and full of fight.

We'd fifty men in column — no time to close a rank —
We yanked our horses sideways and fired by the flank,
But, though we volleyed through 'em and dropped the foremost ones,
The rest came on like devils, right up against our guns.

Now half our boys were rookies who'd never smelt a fight;
The yappin' Cheyenne war-whoop just turned 'em blue with fright.
They started breakin' column and first we veterans knew,
The troop had gone to blazes and let the redskins through.

The sergeants clubbed their carbines, the Captain prayed and swore;
It didn't stop the rookies; they wouldn't stand for more.
Then a bullet caught my mustang and ploughed him underneath
And he bolted toward the hostiles with the bit between his teeth.

Thinks I, "Here's good-bye, Jimmie; but I'll make these heathen grunt,"
So I grabbed my Colt and opened as we sailed into their front.
But they cleared a passage for me and I couldn't trust my eyes
When their outfit broke and scattered, scootin' back across the rise.

Then I turned and, there behind me, all strung out along my trail,
Came the boys of "B" Troop, ridin' like a sizzin' comet's tail,
With their horses at the gallop and revolvers poppin' gay
For they thought I'd led a rally when my mustang ran away!

So that's the way it happened, in brief, without no frills,
That day the Cheyennes jumped us among the Blacksnake Hills,
Which is why I claim the chevrons that I'm sportin' on my sleeve
Was won by my old mustang and dead against my leave.

LARAMIE TRAIL

ACROSS the crests of the naked hills,
Smooth-swept by the winds of God,
It cleaves its way like a shaft of gray,
Close-bound by the prairie sod.
It stretches flat from the sluggish Platte
To the lands of forest shade;
The clean trail, the lean trail,
The trail the troopers made.

It draws aside with a wary curve
From the lurking, dark ravine,
It launches fair as a lance in air
O'er the raw-ribbed ridge between:
With never a wait it plunges straight
Through river or reed-grown brook;
The deep trail, the steep trail,
The trail the squadrons took.

They carved it well, those men of old,
Stern lords of the border war,
They wrought it out with their sabres stout
And marked it with their gore.
They made it stand as an iron band
Along the wild frontier;
The strong trail, the long trial,
The trail of force and fear.

For the stirring note of the bugle's throat
Ye may hark to-day in vain,
For the track is scarred by the gang-plow's shard
And gulfed in the growing grain.
But wait to-night for the moonrise white;
Perchance ye may see them tread
The lost trail, the ghost trail,
The trail of the gallant dead.

'Twixt cloud and cloud o'er the pallid moon
From the nether dark they glide
And the grasses sigh as they rustle by
Their phantom steeds astride.
By four and four as they rode of yore
And well they know the way;
The dim trail, the grim trail,
The trail of toil and fray.

With tattered guidons spectral thin
Above their swaying ranks,
With carbines swung and sabres slung
And the gray dust on their flanks.
They march again as they marched it then
When the red men dogged their track,
The gloom trail, the doom trail,
The trail they came not back.

They pass, like a flutter of drifting fog,
As the hostile tribes have passed,
As the wild-wing'd birds and the bison herds
And the unfenced prairies vast,
And those who gain by their strife and pain
Forget, in the land they won,
The red trail, the dead trail,
The trail of duty done.

But to him who loves heroic deeds
The far-flung path still bides,
The bullet sings and the war-whoop rings
And the stalwart trooper rides.
For they were the sort from Snelling Fort
Who traveled fearlessly
The bold trail, the old trail,
The trail to Laramie.

II

PRAIRIE SONGS

II

PRAIRIE SONGS

THE CALL OF THE WIND

THE wind comes rollicking out of the West
(Oh, wind of the West, so free!)
With the scent of the plains on its heaving breast.
(Oh, plains that I no more see!)
It cries through the smoky and roaring town
Of the tossing grass and the hillsides brown
Where the cattle graze as the sun goes down.
(Oh, sun on the prairie sea!)

And this is the song that the West wind sings;
(Oh, call of the wind, have done!)
That the worth of life is the joy it brings.
(Oh, joy that is never won!)
That the stainless sky and the virgin sod
Hold richer wealth, of the peace of God,
Than the streets where the weary toilers plod.
(Oh, streets that the heart would shun!)

But, wind of the West, in vain thy voice,
(Oh, why must the voice be vain?)
If joy were all, 'twere an easy choice.
(Oh, choice that is fraught with pain!)
The road of life is a hard, hard way
But yet, if we hold to the path, it may
Lead back to the land of dreams some day.
(Yes, back to the plains again!)

THE FUR TRADERS

THE moon, on plain and bluff and stream,
Casts but a faint and fitful gleam,
For, striving in a ghostly race,
The clouds that rack across her face
Now leave her drifting, white and high,
In some clear lake of purple sky
And then, like waves with crests upcurled,
Obscure her radiance from the world.
Across the wild Missouri's breast
Which lies in icy armor dressed,
The north wind howls and moans,
Wrenching the naked trees that stand
Like skeletons along the strand,
To shrill and creaking groans.
On distant butte and wide coteau
Is snow and never-ending snow;
Whirling aloft in spiral clouds,

Weaving in misty, crystal shrouds,
Then floating back to earth again
To drift across the frozen plain
In strangely sculptured trough and crest,
Like some slow ocean's heaving breast.

Such night is not for mortal kind
To fare abroad; the bitter wind,
The restless snows, the frost-locked mold
Bid living creatures seek their hold
And leave to Winter's monarch will
The solitudes of vale and hill.
The buffalo, whose legions vast
A few short moons ago have passed
Adown these bleak hillsides,
Now graze full many a league away
Where, through the genial southern day
The winds of Matagorda Bay
Caress their shaggy hides.
The wolves have sought their coverts deep
In dark ravine and coulée steep,
Where cedar thickets, dense and warm,
Afford protection from the storm,
And every creature of the plains
Has left his well-beloved domains
To seek, or near or far,
A haven where warm-blooded life
May cower from the dreadful strife
Of hyperborean war.

But see, across yon barren swell
Where wind and snow-rime weave a spell
Of phantoms o'er the hill,
What awkward creatures of the night
Come creeping, snail-like, on the sight,
Halting and slow, in weary plight
But ever onward still?
Their limbs are long and lank and thin,
Their forms are swathed from foot to chin
In garments rude of bison skin.

Upon each broad and stalwart back
Is strapped a huge and weighty pack,
Their coarse and ragged hair
Streams back from brows whose dusky stain
Is dyed by blizzard, wind, and rain,
They are a fearsome pair;
Lone pilgrims of the coteau vast,
They seem like cursed souls, outcast
To roam forever there.

Yet hark! Adown the cold wind flung,
What voice of merriment gives tongue?
'Tis human laughter, deep and strong,
And now, all suddenly, a song
Rings o'er the prairie lone!
A chanson old, whose rythm oft
Has lingered on the breezes soft
That kiss the storied Rhone,
Or floated up from lips of love
To some dark casement, high above
The streets of Avignon,
Where lovely eyes, all maidenly,
Glance shyly forth, that they may see
What lover comes to serenade
Ere drawing back the latticed shade
To toss a red rose down.

What fickle fate, what strange mischance
Has brought this song of sunny France
To ride upon the blizzard crest
That mantles o'er the wild Northwest?
To find its echoes sweet
In barren butte and stark cliff-side,
Whose beetling summits override
The fierce Missouri's murky tide;
To rouse the scurrying feet
Of antelope and lean coyote;
To hear its last, long, witching note,
Caught in the hoot-owl's dismal throat,
Sweep by on pinions fleet.

Full far these errant sons of Gaul
Have journeyed from the gray sea-wall
That fronts on fair Marseilles,
But still the spirit of their race
Bids them to turn a dauntless face
On whate'er Fates prevail.
The storm may drive to bush and den
The creatures of the field and fen,
But neither storm nor darksome night
Nor ice-bound stream nor frowning height
Can check or turn or put to flight
These iron-hearted men.

Across the flats of stinging sands,
Through thickets, woods, and sere uplands,
Their weary pathway shows;
Toward some far fort of logs and stakes
Deep hidden in the willow brakes,
Right onward still it goes
Persistently, an unblazed track,
Bent from the cheerless bivouac
Of some poor, prairie Indian band
Whose chill and flimsy tepees stand
Half buried in the snows.

Yet what of costly merchandise
That wealth may covet, commerce prize,
Can these adventurers wring
From that ill-fed, barbarian horde
As seems to them a meet reward
For all the risk and toil and pain
They've suffered on the winter plain
Amid their journeying?

Ah, wealth enough is garnered there,
Though not of gold or jewels rare,
To rouse the white man's longing greed
And send his servants forth with speed
To lay the treasure bare.
The trinkets cheap these traders brought

The savages have dearly bought,
Persuaded guilelessly to pay
A ten times doubled usury
In furs of beavers and of minks,
Of silver fox and spotted lynx.
For all their rich and varied store
Of peltries, gathered from the shore,
The wood, the prairie, and the hill
By trapper's art and hunter's skill,
The traders' heavy packs now fill.

A journey far those furs must go
From these wild fastnesses of snow,
By travois, pack, and deep bateau;
By keel-boat, sloop, and merchantman
Till half a hemisphere they span,
Ere they will lie, at last, displayed
By boulevard and esplanade
In Europe's buzzing marts of trade.
These marten skins, so soft and warm,
May wrap some Russian princess' form
And shield her from the Arctic storm
That howls o'er Kroonstadt's bay;
That robe, a huge black bear which, dressed,
May cloak some warrior monarch's breast
As, gazing o'er the battle crest,
He sees the foemen's legions pressed
In panic, from the fray.

But it is not the destinies
Which may, perchance, beyond the seas,
Await these rare commodities,
That chiefly signify,
Though king and knight and princess fair
Should leave the coteaus stripped and bare
Their pride to gratify.
But this; that in the storm to-night,
Through cloudy gloom, through pale moonlight,
Two men still press along,
Not hiding, as the wolf and hind,

From blinding snow and bitter wind
Nor, like the Indian, crouching low
Above a brush-fire's feeble glow
But, vigorous and strong,
Hasting their bidden task to close
Whate'er obstructions interpose
And parrying Fortune's adverse blows
Right gaily, with a song.

Plains of the mighty, virgin West,
Plains in cold, sterile beauty dressed,
Your time of fruit draws near!
Creatures of thicket, vale and shore,
Tribes of the hills, your reign is o'er,
The conquerer is here!
His footprints mark your secret grounds,
His voice upon your air resounds,
His name, unto your utmost bounds,
Is one of strength and fear.

The magic of his virile powers
Shall change your desert wastes to bowers,
Your nakedness to shade;
Shall stretch broad, rustling ranks of corn
Along your stony crests forlorn
And wheat-fields, dappling in the sun,
Where your mad autumn fires have run.
The trails your bison made
Shall grow beneath his hurrying feet
To highway broad and village street,
Along whose grassy sides shall sleep
Meadows and orchards, fruited deep;
Homesteads and schools and holy fanes
To prove that all these fertile plains
Are turned by God's eternal plan
To serve the onward march of man,
Which sweeping down the vale of time
With gathering strength and hope sublime
Is never checked nor stayed.

COWBOY SONG

WE are up in the morning ere dawning of day
And the grub-wagon's busy and flap-jacks in play,
While the herd is astir over hillside and swale
With the night-riders rounding them into the trail.

Come, take up your cinches
And shake up your reins;
Come, wake up your bronco
And break for the plains;
Come, roust those red steers from the long chaparral,
For the outfit is off for the railroad corral!

The sun circles upward, the steers as they plod
Are pounding to powder the hot prairie sod,
And it seems, as the dust turns you dizzy and sick
That you'll never reach noon and the cool, shady creek.

But tie up your kerchief
And ply up your nag;
Come, dry up your grumbles
And try not to lag;
Come, now for the steers in the long chaparral,
For we're far on the way to the railroad corral!

The afternoon shadows are starting to lean
When the grub-wagon sticks in a marshy ravine
And the herd scatters further than vision can look,
For you bet all true punchers will help out the cook!

So shake out your rawhide
And snake it up fair;
Come, break in your bronco
To taking his share!
Come, now for the steers in the long chaparral,
For it's all in the drive to the railroad corral!

But the longest of days must reach evening at last,
When the hills are all climbed and the creeks are all passed,
And the tired herd droops in the yellowing light;
Let them loaf if they will, for the railroad's in sight!

Come, strap up the saddle
Whose lap you have felt;
So flap up your holster
And snap up your belt;
Good-bye to the steers and the long chaparral;
There's a town that's a trump by the railroad corral!

CHRISTMAS EVE AT KIMBALL

MET a chap the other night, down on Halsted Street,
Holdin' up Mike Kelley's bar, sippin' mint an' rye;
I'd just hit the Stock Yards with a cattle-train o' meat,
Loped around to Kelly's place, singein' hot an' dry.

This here chap was somethin' rare; Henglish tweeds an' gloves,
Stripey collar round his neck, sparks to throw away,
He was givin' 'em a song, 'bout the town he loves,
How they hit "the pace that kills," down on old Broadway.

Heaved a wistful, weepy sigh 'twould make a bay steer groan
When he told us what a spangled, rompin' time he'd had
Christmas Eve a year ago, just before he'd blown
Out into the "Woolly," where we don't know shrimps from shad.

Claimed along 'bout three a. m. they found an apple girl
Sleepin' in a doorway; stole her fruit to raise a fuss,
Then they made her do a Midway Turkish dancin' whirl
'Fore they'd pay the damage — an' he called that generous!

Awful homesick yarn it was. 'Peared he couldn't find
Nothin' in the whoopin' line warm enough out West.
Made me sort o' weary, so, to ease my mind,
I dug up a Christmas tale an' let him take a rest.

Mind the Northwest homestead boom, twenty-odd years back,
When Dakota stuck her nose above the waves o' fame?
I was pottin' coyotes from a Brule County shack,
Burnin' hay an' eatin' pork an' holdin' down my claim.

Not a strictly stirrin' life; quite a lot less gay
Than workin' in a grave-yard, a-plantin' of remains.
Notion hit me Christmas time to take a holiday;
Roped the cayuse, strapped my guns, an' struck across the plains.

Galloped into Kimball 'long 'bout milkin' time,
Wind a-whoopin' from the North, cold as billy hell—
Ever known a prairie town in its infant prime?
Kimball was a corker an' I've seen some pretty swell.

Just a bunch o' dry goods boxes dumped along a rise,
Cracks plugged up with pitch an' tar, stove-pipes stickin' through,
But, you bet, that little burg was sure enough the prize
Fer stirrin' up a tinted time an' startin' it to brew.

Thought I'd have a quiet night; Lord, it wa'n't no use!
First bumped into Billy Stokes, up from Bijou Hills,
We wandered into "Rancher's Rest," spang onto "Shorthorn" Bruce,
Charlie Gates an' "Doc" Lemar, curin' of their chills.

Well, that closed the "quiet" act; things was due to burn.
Dabbled with the red-eye till the lamp-lights ringed an' soared.
Then Lemar got wealthy an' thought he'd take a turn
Spinnin' out his sinkers on the racy roulette board.

Oh, the time was lovely (fer the man behind the wheel!)
Stokes an' "Shorthorn" joined the game, just to try their luck,
Charlie, landin' on the bar, started off a reel;
Then the banker "rolled the roll"—an' the blame thing stuck!

"Fixed!" yells Bill an' "Shorthorn," whippin' out their pipes;
Banker backed ag'in the wall, huntin' fer a crack,
Air just pink with cuss-words, runnin' round in stripes,
Doors an' winders full o' folks, none a-comin' back.

"Doc" was just a-prancin' round, gettin' things in range,
So's to shoot the whole joint up without no undue pause,
When we heerd a little voice, thin an' mighty strange,
Pipin' up from somewheres, "Mister, is you Santa Claus?"

Well, I swan, if that there shack had gathered up an' r'ared
An' galloped off across the street, we'd not been more knocked out
Than when we seen that little girl, blue-eyed an' curly-haired,
A-standin' in the bar-room, half-way 'twixt a smile an' pout.

Say, we ducked them guns o' ours underneath our hats
'S if the Sheriff's deputies had just come jumpin' in.
We sure was worse kerflummuxed than a lot o' sneakin' rats,
Caught a-stealin' barley in some feller's stable-bin.

That there little lady stood an' looked around a spell,
Then she toddled to Lemar an' looked up in his eyes:
"Oo's the big, long-whiskered man I'se heard my Mama tell,
'At brings nice fings to everyone what's good an' never cries.

"Mama's good; I'se tried to be"— her eyes began to fill —
"But she says 'at Santa Claus can't come this Christmas Day.
I don't see why; since Papa's in that still place on the hill
She never gets no p'itty clo'es, nor me nice toys for play.

"She told me, though, 'at Santa Claus was here in town to-night
An' so I fought I'd dess slip out an' find him if I could
An' see if he's dot sump'n left — I fought, perhaps, he might —
An', mister, if you's Santy, tan we have it, if we's good?"

I've seen "Doc" get ditched an' wrecked with forty cars o' steers
An' take it like a mallard duck, paradin' in the rain;
Never thought he'd learned to know there was such things as tears,
Which shows it's hard to figger how a feller works his brain.

He turned round an' raked his stakes from off that roulette board,
An' the whiskey wasn't guilty for his huskiness o' voice:
"Boys," says he, "I pass this deal right here an,' by the Lord,
I blow my wad on somethin' else — you all kin take yer choice.

"It's well enough to whoop things up an' get a gorgeous head
But mighty wise to recolleck yer coin's just gone to grass.
I'm a-goin' to take a whirl at Santy Claus, instead,
Wish that toys was in my line, but maybe these'll pass."

Every cent he skirmished, from his hat-band to his pants,
Went into the apron that the little one held out;
Rest of us, we follered suit, scrappin' fer the chance,
Then we took her to the door an' finished with a shout.

But, before we let her go — shameful sort o' trick! —
Made her kiss us all good-night; "Doc" took his right slow.
I just sucked my breath all in an' hustled through it quick;
Still, she didn't seem to mind; guess she didn't know.

"Now," says I, "my homesick friend" (to him on Halsted Street),
"You're a painful sort o' sight, crackin' up Broadway.
Kimball, Brule County, was an ace-high flush to beat
An' I'd backed her to the limit fer a winner in the play.

"But the beauty-spot on Kimball an' the boys that made her hum
Was the fact that rye an' roulette didn't petrify their souls;
Simply tip 'em to the theory that yer luck was on the bum
An' they'd cut the game instanter an' deliver up their rolls.

"An' if I'd a wife an' children an' was billed fer Canaan's Strand
I'd take a sight more pleasure in a-turnin' up my toes
If I left 'em to the mercies o' that old Dakota land
Than in your plug-hat city where the money-grubber grows."

A LAMENT

"RAWHIDE" Smith's gone crazy.
"Rawhide" was my pard.
Used to be a daisy;
Say, it's mighty hard!

Down at Twin Buttes City
"Rawhide" met a maid,
Young an' slim an' pretty
An' she turned his haid.

We jest started dancin'
Frolicsome an' gay —
Hang the pay-day prancin'
When it ends that way!

Say! that little creature
Got him roped all right;
First I knew, a preacher
Had spliced 'em good an' tight.

Now he's gone to farmin'
Way off from the range.
Says his place is charmin';
Lord, he's gettin' strange!

No more pal to cheer me
Ridin' herd at night;
No more comrade near me,
Game fer fun or fight.

One coat did fer cover
Cold nights when it stormed,
But them nights is over;
"Rawhide" Smith's reformed!

JESUS GARCIA

DOWN in Sonora's wide, white lands,
Lost in the endless waste of sands,
Lies, like a blot of gray and brown,
Nacozari, a desert town.
All day long through its narrow street
Children play in the dust and heat,
Naked of limb and dark of face,
Lithe as fawns in their careless grace,
Chattering shrill in a half-caste speech
Far from the Spanish the school rooms teach.

All day long by the doorways small
Cut through the thick adobe wall,
Or in the narrow belts of shade
Here and there by the flat roofs made,
Lounge the indolent, swarthy men,
Moving sluggishly now and then
Better to scan their dicing throws
Under their low-tipped sombreros,
But, for the most, content to lie
Drowsing the listless hours by,
Watching, each, as the thin, blue jet
Curls from his drooping cigarette.

All day long, from the dawn's first flush
When the mass is said in the morning hush
Till fall of eve, when the vesper's peal
Calls the faithful again to kneel,
Nothing rouses the quiet place,
Lulled in the desert's hushed embrace,
Save when out of the distance dim,
Over the far horizon's rim,
Sudden a purring whisper comes,
Rising swift, like the throb of drums,
And the iron track which stretches forth,
Straight as a lance from south to north,
Quivers and sings in the mighty strain

From the grinding wheels of a through-bound train
Then, for a space, as the whistle screams,
Nacozari awakes from dreams.
Women and children, boys and men
Stream to the station platform then,
Eager to gaze from its long plank walk,
With gesturing arms and rapid talk,
At the huge machine like a comet hurled
From the mystical zone of the outer world.

Thus it was on one summer's day,
While the land in its noontide slumber lay
With never a living creature near
Save a lizard, perhaps, by a cactus spear
Basking himself in the fervid heat,
Or, high aloft, like a pirate fleet,
A flock of vultures on lazy wing
Circling wide in a watchful ring,
That into the street of the desert town
A long, slow freight came rolling down,
Laden with goods of Northern yield
For Mexican mine and town and field.

Rumbling in with failing speed
It came to rest like a tired steed,
With the mogul engine's dusty flank
Close by the massive water-tank,
As if it longed, like a living thing,
To quench its thirst at the cooling spring
Of the thousand-foot artesian well,
Sunk through the desert's crusted shell.

Just as it stopped with a grinding jar
Rattling back from car to car,
Out of the engine-cab swung clear
Jesus Garcia, the engineer,
Sooted and grimed to his finger-tips
But the lilt of a song on his smiling lips,
For he was handsome and young and strong
And love was the theme of his murmured song.

Slowly he passed his engine by
Scanning its length with a practiced eye,
Touching a polished slide-valve here,
Or there, a shaft of the running-gear,
Which done, he turned in a boyish mood
To a group of children who, gaping, stood
At the side of the track, too wonder-bound
To move a limb or to make a sound.
Into their midst Garcia sprung
And a chubby lad to his shoulder swung,
Who, laughing, clutched at his corded neck
Like a sailor tossed on a rocking deck.

Perhaps to the Mexican engineer
The child suggested a vision dear
Of a little boy of his very own
In a white-washed cottage at Torreon,
And the dark-eyed mother who, day by day,
Told beads for her husband, far away,
And watched, as the trains steamed forth and back,
For his mogul engine along the track.

But only a moment, with swinging feet,
The baby perched on his lofty seat,
For suddenly down by the cars in rear
There rang a shriek of unbridled fear.
Garcia turned, in amaze looked back;
A score of men from the railroad track
Were rushing away in a frantic race
As if they had looked on a demon's face,
And then, as he turned, the cause was plain
For half-way back in the standing train
A flame licked out from a box-car's side,
Yellow and spiteful, a handbreadth wide.

His cheek grew pale, but his lips still smiled
As he slipped from his shoulder the startled child,
Nor even forgot in his haste to place
A good-bye kiss on the upturned face;
Then he sprang to the street with a bound and gazed

Intent, at the spot where the fire blazed.
Barely a glance was enough to tell
It was a car which he knew full well —
Shipped in bond by a fast freight line,
Bound for a great Sonora mine —
Filled to the roof and loaded tight
With closed-tiered boxes of dynamite;
Enough, if its deadly strength found vent,
To rock the land like a billowed tent,
Sweeping the town from the desert sand
Clean as the palm of an opened hand.

What did he do, the engineer,
Face to face with this mortal fear?
Turn, as the rest, to the desert wide,
Mad with dread, for a place to hide,
Leaving the town and its helpless folk
Doomed to death at a single stroke?
No! Though only a peon born
Heart like his might a king adorn!

Waving his arms to his frightened crew,
Such as remained, a scattered few,
Garcia uttered a warning shout —
"Undile! Vamos!" ("Run! Get out!")
Leaped to his engine waiting there,
Opened the throttle, released the air,
And started the jets for the sand to run
On the glassy rails where the drivers spun,
Till, biting the steel with a spurt of fire
Sputtering back from each grinding tire,
The monster conquered its straining load
And, gathering speed on the curveless road,
It rolled from the town and left it whole,
Like death torn loose from a stricken soul.

But looking backward with stern-set face,
Throttle gripped in a firm embrace,
Garcia goaded his panting steed

Ever and ever to faster speed,
Knowing still if the blow should fall
It would shatter the village wall from wall.
Now from the sides of the car behind,
Fanned by its flight through the rushing wind,
Burst the flames in a lashing sheet
Peeling the paint with its fervid heat,
Vomiting sparks like a fiery hail
On the cars that rocked in its lurid trail.

Still the mogul, in giant flight,
Swaying drunkenly left and right,
Strained to the race, while the rails it trod
Thundered behind it, rod by rod;
Still in its cab, foredoomed, alone,
Waiting death like a man of stone,
Stood Garcia, his feet braced wide
To the pitch and plunge of the engine's stride,
With never a frown to show he knew
Regret for the task he was there to do.

Hardly a mile had his wild train fled
Into the desert straight ahead,
When a flare of light to his vision came
As if the world were engulfed in flame.
Perhaps it fell on his closing eyes
Like the great, white light of Paradise;
Perhaps, in the roar which smote him there,
Too deep for a mortal ear to bear,
He heard but the Heavenly trumpet-roll
Blown clear to welcome a hero's soul.
At least, if any have won to rest
In the fair, green land of the ever blest
By earning their right therein to dwell,
Jesus Garcia deserved it well,
For in the blast that strewed his train,
Torn in fragments, along the plain,
Only his soul went forth to meet
The final call at his Master's feet.

So it is that to-day, alone,
In a white-washed cottage at Torreon,
A brown-skinned woman with sad, dark eyes
Looks on her child at his play, and sighs,
Knowing well she will hark in vain
For her husband's step at the door again,
Or watch, as the trains steam back and forth,
For his mogul engine out of the North.

So it is that when evening falls,
Draping the dull adobe walls
Fold on fold in its tender mist,
Purple and blue and amethyst,
And Nacozari kneels down to pray
At the vesper call from the chapel gray,
Many an orison of love
Is wafted up to the stars above
For the peace of Jesus Garcia's soul;
He who had saved the village whole
By the utmost gift which a man can give —
Life, that his fellow men might live.

A CHRISTMAS LETTER

DEAR MISS:
For this pink stationery
Forgive me; it's all I could find
In Buck Dalton's store at the Ferry,
So I took it—I hope you won't mind.

For it's Christmas good wishes I'm sending,
Though in words not the best ever slung,
To you, where the Tiber is wending,
From me, on the banks of the Tongue.

Perhaps you've forgotten the morning
When your car of the Overland Mail
Broke loose on a curve, without warning,
And was ditched by the spread of a rail?

I was herding near by in the valley,
And I pulled out your father and you,
And I found that your name, Miss, was Sallie,
And—well, I remember. Do you?

You were there for five hours at least, Miss,
Then the whistle, a smile, a last word,
And you rolled away to the East, Miss,
While I galloped back to the herd.

You, back to your world and its beauties,
New York, Paris, Rome, and all those,
I, back to a cowboy's rough duties
In sunshine and rainstorm and snows.

But to-night I'm alone in the shack here
On my quarter-square Government claim,
While coyotes are yelping out back here—
You'd be scared, Miss, I guess, by the same,

The moonlight is white on the river,
And the long, frozen miles of the plain
Seem to shrink in the north wind and shiver
And wish it was summer again.

It's different where you are, I reckon,
Leastways from the books it must be,
Where the green hills of Italy beckon
And the Tiber sings down to the sea;

Where the red roses always are climbing
And the air smells of olives and pines,
And at evening the vesper bells' chiming
Floats up toward the far Apennines.

You like it, no doubt, and you'd never
See beauties that nature can hold
Where the snow lies in drifts on the river
And the prairies are empty and cold.

But somehow I wouldn't forego it
For all of those soft, southern lands.
I breathe it and feel it and know it;
It grips me as if it had hands.

The stars in the night, how they glisten!
The plains in the day, how they spread!
There's room to stand up in, and listen,
And know there's a God overhead.

And then, when the summer is coming
And the cattle start out on the trails,
And you hearken at dawn to the drumming
Of prairie-hens down in the swales,

Why, Italy simply ain't in it!—
But, Miss, here I'm talking too free.
Excuse me; my thoughts for a minute
Got sort of the better of me.

It was just about Christmas I started;
To me, it was only a name
Till that day when we met, talked and parted,
But since it has not been the same.

For you gave me a new kind of notion
Of the countries and people and such
On the trails that lie over the ocean —
I guess we don't differ so much.

And Christmas is chuck full of spirit
That everywhere under the sun
Warms up anyone who comes near it
And fills them with good-will and fun.

So I want you to know from this letter
That the time by the train wreck with you
Made me know all humanity better
And like the whole bunch better, too.

And I hope, if it seems like presuming
That a letter shall come to your door
In the land where the roses are blooming
From me, on the Tongue's icy shore,

You'll forgive, Miss, an uncultured party
In the spirit of Christmas, and take
These thanks and good wishes, all hearty,
From

Your most sincere

CHEYENNE JAKE.

THE COYOTEVILLE PEACE MEETING

WE held a peace convention in Coyoteville last night,
A reg'lar Haygue Tribunal fer order, law, an' right,
Fer we'd about concluded that fightin' come too free
An' municipal conditions wasn't all they ought to be.

"Dad" Sykes had been to Denver an' Blake to Omaha,
An' they come back a-preachin' of the sights which they had saw,
How no one carried weepons an' folks was nice an' mild,
An', compared with them there cities, Coyoteville was wild.

In Coyoteville the habit of some gentlemen at nights,
If they felt in pleasant spirits, was to puncture out the lights.
Also, in questions dealin' with a social poker game
They was prone to draw their irons an' argue with the same.

All which, from "Dad" Sykes' view-point, an' likewise Mister Blake's,
Was morally pervertin' an' the biggest of mistakes,
Since Coyoteville's best people had begun a-takin' pride
In makin' her the model of the cattle-countryside.

Therefore, we held a meetin' in the Frou-Frou Dancin' Hall;
"Dad" Sykes he played first fiddle an' Blake was there to call —
I mean that Sykes persided an' Billy wrote it down
When motions was perpounded on how to run the town.

"Bat" Blarcum broached the idee, supported by a speech,
That the closin' of the thirst-joints was the only thing would reach,
Since liquor bred dissension which only blood could stop
As he knew from observation, though he "never touched a drop!"

Then Pierpont Robyn Stebbins arose an' begged to say
That the road to civic virtue lay quite another way;
To punish weepon toters would be the proper feat —
Jest confiscate their weepons an' make 'em clean the street.

But Bobby Earl was doubtful of Pierpont Robyn's plan;
He thought that cleaning roadways would humiliate a man.

"Bat" Blarcum felt as Earl did, an' inferred that Stebbins' scheme
Was degenerate an' Eastern an' an iridescent dream.

Then Pierpont stood up coldly an' stated to the Chair
That Mister Earl's opinions would be weighty anywhere,
Therefore he meekly yielded, lest he be crushed indeed
By the most substantial leader of the law an' order creed.

Now Bobby weighed three hundred an' it somewhat nettled him
To be ridiculed in public there by Stebbins, who was slim,
But the Chairman wouldn't hear him till Pierpont's partner, Drew,
Had made some observations about "Bat" Blarcum, too.

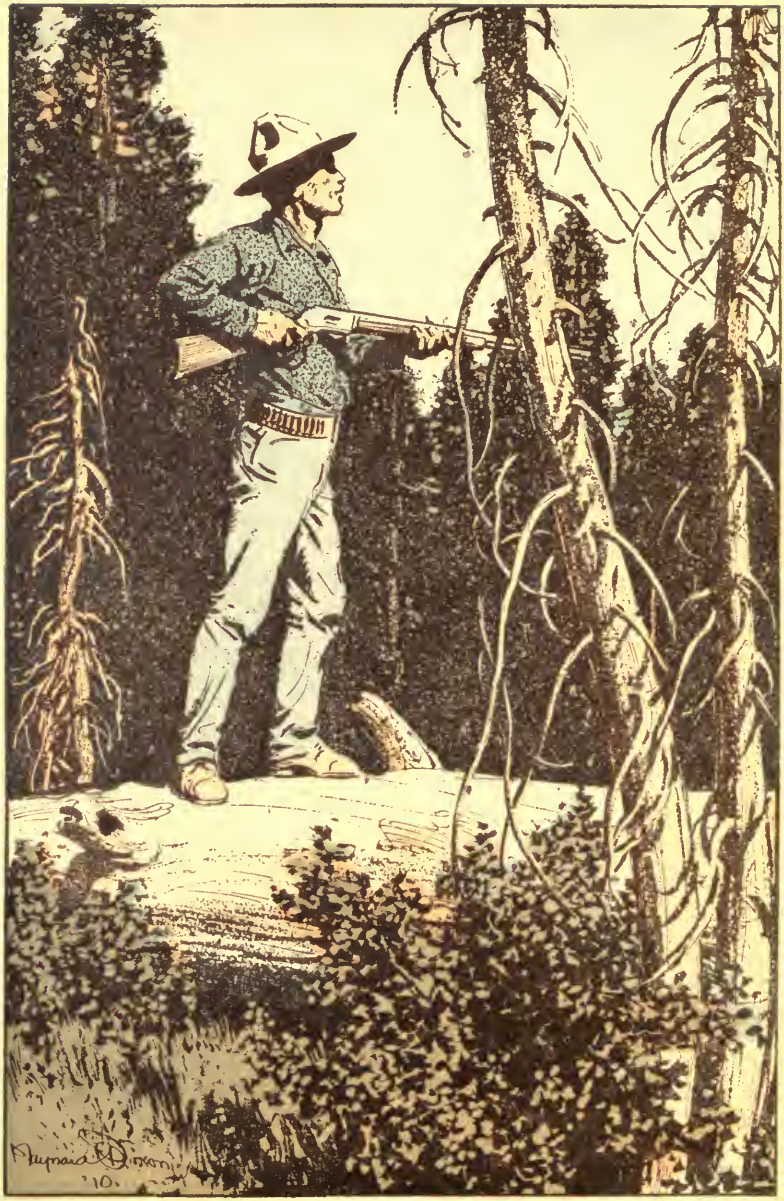
Which last, he said he hated to cast aspersions 'round,
But he felt "Bat's" plan of action was very far from sound,
An' he questioned these reformers whose reform was brought about
Through a hate for rum engendered by the Keeley curin' route.

He finished; whereat Bobby raised objections an' was pained
At the style of Stebbins' language — an' Bobby was sustained.
Then Stebbins said the Chairman might be strong an' somethin' more,
But he dared not try sustainin' Mister Earl down on the floor!

By this time indications made it plain to persons there
That a spirit of contention was a-breedin' in the air,
Fer Drew jumped through a window as Blarcum slowly rose,
While Bobby Earl was aimin' fer Pierpont Stebbins' nose.

The other folks concluded it was gettin' time they went,
An' started fer the doorways by unanimous consent,
While the Chair came down on Stebbins regardless of the law,
An' Blake propelled the Minutes at Mister Blarcum's jaw.

There'll be a bunch of fun'rals in Coyoteville today;
Some well-known ex-reformers in the leadin' parts will play;
An' Coyoteville's considerin' this lesson o'er an' o'er,
That peace may have its battles as well, sometimes, as war.


Maynard Dixon
'10.

THE SONG OF THE WINCHESTER

FULL heir to the twist-bored yager gun with its half-inch slug, I stand;
His rest was the Forty-niner's arm, as mine is the sportsman's hand.
I am king of my day as he of his, from the swamp to the saw-backed spur,
And there's never a trail but has heard the hail of the ringing Winchester!

I've saved the leaguered wagon-train from the scalping-knife and stake;
I have held the lead through the blind stampede in the bison's dust-dimmed wake;

By the reeking dives of the placer camp I have killed for a careless jest,
And I've raped the loot from the stage-coach boot at the bandit's stern behest.

Away in the dusk of the Arctic night, where the frozen rivers flow
And the fringed aurora floods and fades on the endless fields of snow,
The hardy hunters trust my sights and my spinning bullet's speed
When they seek the lair of the great white bear or the haunt of the gray wolf's breed.

The steaming glades of the Amazon, where the crouching jaguar springs,
Have felt the breath of the whirring death my long-necked cartridge brings,
And the wind-whipped crests where the condor nests on the roof-ribs of the world
Have marked the thin, blue jet of smoke from my flashing muzzle hurled.

Oh, I am the mate of the deep-lunged men, stout son of a martial line,
From Uruguay to the Kootenay, from mangrove-reef to pine;
In the throbbing glare of the desert air, by the rocks where the rapids purr,
There is never a gun for fight or fun like the steel-blue Winchester!

PRAIRIE FIRE

OVER the lonely prairie
The autumn twilight dies;
Quick, fitful winds through the hollows pass
That moan and sigh in the long, dry grass,
And ever a killdee cries.
The hovering darkness gathers;
But what is the rose tint there,
That flushes the far horizon
Like a turbulent city's glare?

It gathers and grows and widens,
It swallows the southward sky
And the timid wind, like a hunted deer,
Makes pause to hearken, then leaps in fear
And wails as it hurries by.
The heavens glow red to the zenith
In the ominous, fevered light,
And the glimmering hilltops waver,
Sharp-drawn on the walls of night.

And now, as a wide-flung army,
Hurled hot on the foemen's spears,
With plumes of smoke on its tossing head,
With flaring banners and lances red,
The wavering flood appears.
It runs like a wolf in hunger,
It roars like a mountain storm,
And before it the fleeing creatures
Far over the prairie swarm.

Pigeon and grouse and plover,
The air is alive with wings,
And the firm ground shakes with the pounding feet
Of bellowing bison in mad retreat
And the panic of smaller things.
Behind them the flames speed onward
O'er level and slope and swale,
And the grass is melted to embers,
Whirled high on the parching gale.

As strong as the ocean's billows,
As fierce as the blizzard's breath,
Is aught in Nature that may withstand
The league-long sweep of this scorching brand
That clutters the plains with death?
Ahead is a waiting darkness,
A shadow athwart the glare,
And the wild things have turned them to it,
For they know there is safety there.

The river, at last, the river!
A haven where all may hide.
With toil-spent lungs and with straining feet
They reel from the smoke and the peeling heat
To plunge in its grateful tide,
While the tongue of the hungry demon
Licks out on the naked sand,
And slavers its baffled fury
And sinks, like a dying hand.

Over the lonely prairie
So wan, the white moonrise grows;
From out of the North a chill wind rides
That spins the ash on the black hillsides
And, fading, an ember glows.
The clustered diamonds of midnight
Flash keen in the purple deep,
The hollows and hills are empty;
The desolate prairies sleep.

III

RIVER SONGS

Maynard Dixon
'10

III

RIVER SONGS

THE MISSOURI

WHEN the hollow void of Chaos
By the sun's first flame was lit,
And morning kissed the new earth's leaden sky,
When the hand of God reached downward
To the ocean's utmost pit
And reared the ragged continents on high,

From the naked, dripping ranges
Of the Rocky's granite sweep,
In a pathway through the quaking mud-plains torn,
Surged a waste of briny waters,
Roaring backward to the deep,
And the great Missouri, king of floods, was born.

It was there when, dank and noisome,
On the primal beds of shale
The fern and cycad forests fringed its shore,
And its depths have heaved in whirlpools
To the thresh of fin and tail
As the monster sea-snakes closed in deadly war.

Foot by foot through crumbling valleys
It has fought the Glacial Drift
As from out the North the rock-fanged moraines spread,
Hurling seas of thunderous waters
Through the slowly strangling rift
Where the ice-floes ground and gritted in its bed.

Huge of limb and tusked like tree-trunks,
When the evening sun hung low
Slugged the mammoths down to gambol in its tide,
And 'twas there that, ringed and goaded
By the cave-men's spears and bows,
They fell in blinded agony and died.

So, for dim, uncounted æons
Did the torrent sweep along,
Rolling centuries like pebbles in its sands,
And the prairies sprung and blossomed
And the bison herds grew strong,
And the red men camped and hunted through its lands.

Till there came at last a season
When a gaunt-limbed figure burst
Through the woods that lipped the current's whirling foam,
And the flint-lock that he shifted
As he stooped to quench his thirst
Told the wilderness the first white man was come!

He, the white man, the magician,
Searcher, soldier, settler, lord,
Heir to all the crusted cycles of the past!
What were endless, lagging eras
While earth's wealth was being stored
To the pageant of his power at the last?

Came new visions to the river;
Came the voyageur's swift canoe,
Gliding ghost-like to the silent, dipping oar;
And the blunt-bowed keel-boat harnessed
To its brawny, sweating crew,
As they trailed the long cordelle-rope up the shore.

Came the block-house of the fur-trade,
Where the trappers brought their spoil
From bison-range and log-laced beaver fall;
French and half-breed, Sioux and Yankee,
Flinging out a season's toil
For a week of drunken revelry and brawl.

Up the swinging, bluff-bound reaches
Where the lonely bittern boomed
Throbbed a dull, insistent whisper, growing strong,
As the steamboat, flame-winged herald
To an age forespent and doomed,
Waked the woodlands with its piston's pulsing song.

Reeling down the rain-washed gullies
To its fertile, grassy vales
The Missouri saw the weary ox-teams plod;
Saw the red scouts on the ridges,
Heard the shots and dying wails,
Knew the unmarked graves beneath the prairie sod.

It has watched the thin, gray dust-cloud
With the summer heat-haze blent,
And the glint below of swords and bridle-chains,
As some squad of blue-clad troopers,
Like a wolf-pack on the scent,
Trailed the fleeing travois' track across the plains.

It has seen the long-horned cattle
Take the bisons' pasture lands,
Seen the cornfields spread where once the wild grass stood,
Marked the railroad bind the prairies,
League by league, with iron bands,
Felt the dizzy bridge-span leap its own dark flood.

Till the cow-town's rutted roadways
Into asphalt pavements grew,
By wires webbed and busy markets walled,
And the steel-trussed office building
Reared its cornice to the blue
Where the shanties of the mining camp had sprawled.

Now the hissing, rock-jammed rapids
Where of yore the fish-hawks bred,
Hear the thirsty turbines mumble in the gorge,
Tearing twice ten thousand horse-power
From the prisoned waters' head
To drive the distant smelter, mill and forge.

Now lakes of water ripple
Where before the sands lay dry,
And beyond the concrete walls which hold them caged—
Run shimmering, silver channels
Through fields of wheat and rye
Where yesterday the searing sand-storm raged.

But splendid though the epic
Of the river's wondrous past
As Homer e'er could sing or Milton pen,
It will know its grandest numbers
In the ages yet uncast
When its worth shall yield full measure unto men.

In this storehouse of the Nations,
Where but thousands prosper now,
The homes of teeming millions soon shall be;
On this noble waste of waters,
Untouched by steamer's prow,
Shall roll a people's commerce toward the sea.

Unto us and to our children
Will be dealt the untold gains
If, shaping Nature's promise into deeds,
We accept the willing service
Of this Titan of the plains
And compel its mighty muscles to our needs,

Till its flood runs deep and constant
To the Mississippi's tide,
And the wedded torrents down the South are hurled,
Pouring forth their fleets of plenty
O'er oceans far and wide
To bear our country's riches to the world.

THE OLD CARRY

(Near the mouth of the Missouri River is a narrow tongue of land between that stream and the Mississippi over which the Sioux Indians, on their expeditions in early days, were accustomed to transport their goods and boats in order to avoid the long journey around the point by water. Hence the locality received its name, Portage des Sioux.)

ROUND by tawny, foam-lipp'd streams,
Portage des Sioux,
In thy name what romance dreams,
Portage des Sioux!
But thy trails, once deep and worn,
Now lie gulfed in rustling corn,
And thy forest depths are shorn,
Portage des Sioux.

Where are all the dusky feet,
Portage des Sioux,
Trod thy pathways like a street,
Portage des Sioux?
Nevermore thy vales shall know
Flash of spear and twang of bow,
Nor the evening camp-fire's glow,
Portage des Sioux.

Yet when summer moonlight falls,
Portage des Sioux,
On thy glades and forest walls,
Portage des Sioux,
Phantom figures seem to go
'Neath the branches bending low,
Moccasined and pacing slow,
Portage des Sioux.

And the hoot-owl's mournful rune,
Portage des Sioux,
Quavers toward the sailing moon,
Portage des Sioux,
While, where shore and river meet,
Sob the waves with pulsing feet
Like a tom-tom's dying beat,
Portage des Sioux.

JAKE DALE

WHAT, stranger, you never heerd tell o' Jake,
Jake Dale, o' the "Lucky George"?
You must 'a' been raised in the East, my son,
If you never clapped ears to the yarn that's spun
Of Jakey Dale an' the race he won
In the year o' the big ice gorge.

Come March in the Spring o' '81,
An' the river broke at Pierre
An' come rantin' down on the clean rampage.
She marked 36 on the Yankton gauge,
Which I reckon you know is some of a stage,
An' she covered the bottoms here.

The "George" was hitched on the city bar
Close up by the railroad track.
When the row began we fixed her strong,
Rigged seven hawsers where two belong;
She'd 'a' taken an acre o' soil along
If she'd dragged in the grindin' pack.

But along one night the drift-ice stopped;
The flood run clear as June,
Fer the stuff had jammed in Hagin's Bend
An' choked the channel from end to end,
An' it fought an' screamed like a wild-cat, penned,
In the light o' the cold March moon.

Yeh see that p'int acrost the bar
With the riffle o' shoal below?
Well, that's where the widow o' old Buck Slack
Oncet had a claim an' a drift-wood shack,
Where she lived an' slaved with her young-un pack,
All which was some time ago.

Well, we on the "George" had tumbled out —
The roar o' the jam was wild —
When we heerd a cry through the shriekin' night,
An' there on the p'int, in the pale moonlight,
A-wavin' an' yellin' with all her might,
Stood Buck Slack's youngest child.

An' we knowed, without darin' to say the word,
They was tripped fer the Great Unknown,
Fer the gorge had slapped the current round
An' cut 'em off from the higher ground,
An' the hand that could save 'em from bein' drowned
Was the hand of God alone.

Then all at oncet we heerd a yell
An', down 'cross the willow bank,
A-layin' a course that was skeercely snug,
Came Jakey Dale with his whiskey jug,
As drunk as the mate of a log-raft tug,
An' a-swearin' somethin' rank.

"You rust-chawed fragments o' junk," sez he,
"Now what do you think you've found?
A-standin' 'round on this old bilge tank
Like a bunch o' frogs on a floatin' plank;
Be ye lookin' fer gold in yon cut-bank?"
An' then he heerd that sound.

As quick as the jump of a piston-rod
He was over the wheel-box guard,
An' before we could figger on stoppin' him
He had slashed the falls from the long-boat's rim
An' was out past the slush o' the channel's brim,
A-pullin' quick an' hard.

He sidled his tub through that rippin' flume
While we stood on the "George" an' swore.
The boy was loony with raw-corn gin,
But he reckoned his course to the width of a pin,
Ran straight to the eddy an' clawed her in,
An' staggered himself ashore.

Now, stranger, I want to ask you, flat,
If a man with his head-piece right,
Would 'a' piled eight folks in that skiff's inside
Fer a half-mile pull through that mill-race tide
An' think to land safe at the end o' the ride?
Well, Jake Dale did, that night.

When he shoved her off from the gumbo p'int
She reeled like a sawyer snag,
Then the current caught her along the beam
An' she whirled around an' shot down stream
With the foam from her bow like a cloud o' steam,
As fast as a red-tail stag.

Good Lord, the fright in them children's cries!
It curdled a feller's blood,
Them river men ain't a prayerful race,
But that night more'n one sort o' hid his face
An' sent up a plea to the Throne o' Grace
To guide them through the flood.

An' then that gorge sent up a roar
That shook the solid ground;
The sort that splits yer ears in two
When a side-wheel packet drops a flue
An' blows six b'ilers amongst her crew,
An' cooks them that ain't drowned.

She was breakin' loose like an avalanche,
Slipped free on a mountain side.
Jake Dale turned 'round an' give one look
An' read the truth like a printed book,
Then bent to his oars till the keel-post shook,
An' pulled fer the "George's" side.

He jammed her bow through the buckin' tide
Till the painter floated free;
With blinded eyes an' drippin' skin
He fought fer the race he had set to win
Like a soldier fights, till the ice rolled in
An' ground against her lee.

But he'd got her up to ropin' range
An' we hauled her to the rail.
When he'd landed the last one, safe an' sound,
Jake follered, an' says, as he looked around,
"You fellers fetch out that jug you found,
I'm as dry as the Mormon Trail!"

Well, stranger, that there is the yarn o' Jake,
Jake Dale, o' the "Lucky George."
He wasn't no saint with a gilt-edged crown;
His language would shatter a church-steeple down;
He'd a thirst in his throat that nothin' could drown,
An' a fist like a blacksmith's forge.

But, all the same, he'd a Christian soul
If he hadn't the Christian creed,
An' a better heart, by a blame long shot,
Than some pious folks that brag a lot
On savin' their souls, but haven't got
No time fer their brother's need.

An' I reckon the Lord has found a place
In the Kingdom o' the Lamb
Fer the man that cast his own fears by
An' showed that he wasn't afeared to die
Fer the sake of a frightened baby's cry,
That night o' the big ice jam.

THE ENGINEER OF THE "GOLDEN HIND"

"SLIM JACK" BRITT, of the packet "Golden Hind,"
Runnin' the Missouri 'fore the railroads spoiled the trade,
Engineer, and a good one of his kind,
Claimed to have no feelin's; 'twas the only brag he made.

Come what might, he didn't give a hang;
Watch a Levee shootin' scrape and never turn a hair,
Stand and chew while some other boat went bang!
And blew her decks and b'ilers half a mile up in the air.

News of death didn't bother him,
Never showed no feelin's by word or sigh or frown.
Gabr'el's Trump wouldn't worried Slim,
He'd just hump his shoulders and screw a steam-valve down.

Well, one day, out from Omaha,
Way late in November and makin' our last run,
Blizzard come, quick and thick and raw,
Slim was at the engines when the storm begun.

Boat chuck full, passengers and freight,
Had to get 'em somewhere 'fore the freeze-up brought us to,
So we run, crowdin' on the gait
And hopin' that a blind snag wouldn't rip our bottom through.

All at once a woman screamed aloud —
"Men, the boat's on fire! For God's sake, run ashore!"
Then, of course, panic in the crowd,
Shrieks and groans and curses and the fire's growin' roar.

Down below, 'round the fires there
Crew all took the fever, run up front and prayed —
All but Slim. He didn't seem to care;
Didn't have no feelin's and so he stayed.

Pilot yelled through the speakin' tube,—
"Can you keep the paddles goin' while I make a landin',
Jack?"
"Blamed hot here, but I'll mind yer signals, Rube;
I ain't got no feelin's," was all Slim hollered back.

Through the roof, down the fire came
While he worked his levers, blisterin' like tar,
Blind and black, stickin' to the game
Till she'd made her landin', broad against the bar.

Someone then jumped across the side,
Dragged him from the fire and toted him ashore.
Might as well just have let it slide;
Slim was done with engines for good and evermore.

But he spoke, just 'fore he got through,
Lookin' at the people in a sort o' mild surprise —
"Don't thank me, and don't be sorry, too —
I ain't got no feelin's," said Slim, and closed his eyes.

THE "PAULINE"

A MISSOURI tramp was the boat "Pauline"
An' she ran in '78;
She was warped in the hull an' broad o' beam,
An' her engines sizzled with wastin' steam,
An' a three-mile jog against the stream
Was her average runnin' gait.
Sing ho! fer the rickety "Pauline" maid,
The rottenest raft in the Bismarck trade,
An' her captain an' her mate.

The new "North Queen" come up in June,
Fresh launched from the Saint Joe ways,
As speedy a craft as the river'd float —
She could buck the bends like a big-horn goat —
An' she hauled astern o' that "Pauline" boat
On one o' them nice spring days.
Sing ho! fer the "Pauline," puffin' hard,
With her captain up on the starboard guard,
A-watchin' the "North Queen" raise.

The "Queen," she drew to the "Pauline's" wheel
An' her captain come a-bow;
"I'll give yeh three miles the lead," says he,
"An' beat yeh at that into Old Santee."
"Come on," says the "Pauline's" chief, "an' see!
I'm a-waitin' fer yeh now."
Sing ho! fer the captains, grim an' white
With the smothered hate of an old-time fight
An' the chance fer a new-time row.

So the sassy "Queen" strung out behind
An' let the distance spread,
Till the "Pauline" headed Ackley's Bend
An' herself come in at the lower end;
Then her slow-bell speed begun to mend
Fer the space that the old boat led.
Sing ho! fer the clerks an' the engineers
A-swabbin' the grease on the runnin' gears
An' settin' the stroke ahead.

Puff-puff! they went by the flat sand-bars,
Chug-chug! where the currents spun,
An' the "Pauline's" stokers were not to blame
Fer her tall, black stacks were spoutin' flame,
But the "Queen" crawled up on her, just the same,
Two miles to the "Pauline's" one.
Sing ho! fer the steam-chest's poundin' cough,
A-shakin' the nuts o' the guy-rods off
To the beat o' the piston's run.

The "Queen" pulled up on the old boat's beam
At the mouth o' Chouteau Creek,
An' the "Pauline's" captain stamped an' swore,
Fer the wood bulged out o' the furnace door,
An' the steam-gauge hissed with the load it bore,
But she couldn't do the trick.
Sing ho! fer the pilot at the wheel
A-shavin' the shoals on a twelve-inch keel,
Enough to scare yeh sick.

The "Queen" was doin' her level best
An' she wasn't leadin' far —
Fer the "Pauline" stuck like a barber's leech —
But she let her siren whistle screech
When she led the way into Dodson's Reach,
Three miles from Santee Bar.
Sing ho! fer the "Pauline's" roustabout
A-rollin' the Bismarck cargo out,
Big barrels o' black pine tar.

The "Pauline's" chief was a sight to see
As he stood on the swingin' stage.
"I'll beat that pop-eyed levee-rat
If he banks his fires with bacon fat;
Pile in that tar an' let her scat
An' never mind the gauge!"
Sing ho! fer the boilers singein' red
An' the black smoke vomitin' overhead
From the furnace' flamin' rage.

An' she gained, that rattle-trap mud-scow did,
While her wake got white with spray,
An' forty rods from the landin'-plank
Her bow was a-beam o' the "North Queen's" flank
An' her pilot rushin' her fer the bank
To block the "North Queen's" way.
Sing ho! fer the boilers' burstin' roar
As they hurl them loose from the splittin' floor,
An' tear the decks away.

But the captain bold of the ex-"Pauline,"
He didn't stop a bit,
Fer he flew with the wreckage through the air
An' fell on the landin', fair an' square,
An' the "Queen" run in an' found him there,
R'ared up from where he'd lit.
An' he yelled: "You rouster, I've won the race!
Go git a boat that can keep my pace,
Yer 'North Queen' doesn't fit!"

AFTERGLOW
(On the Missouri)

TWILIGHT on the river, summer everywhere,
Prairie flowers perfuming the warm June air,
Breezes stirring softly on the high bluff's crest
Where stand a lad and maiden, looking toward the West.

Just a lad and maiden, standing, hand in hand,
While the lights are fading from the sunset's fairyland,
While on butte and buttress dies the crimson afterglow
And the mists creep upward from the river far below.

Down there in the valley house lights twinkle out,
Homeward-wending cattle low, laughing children shout,
While those two stand dreaming of another home to be,
Close beside the river, slipping swiftly toward the sea.

O, thou broad, strong river, rolling from the North,
Dost thou, too, see visions, from the centuries spun forth?
See a lad and maiden in some summer long ago
Gazing from the hilltop on the shadowed vale below?

Dusky, slender lovers, clasping hand in hand
While the tepee fires flicker down there on the strand —
Wild, unconquered children of the forest and the plain,
Dreaming, softly dreaming that same old dream again!

River of the Northland, in thy banks of living green,
Many are the visions that thy changing tides have seen,
Yet they came and vanished with Time's ceaseless onward flow,
Grew and bloomed and faded like the sunset's afterglow.

Only this was changeless in the centuries agone,
Only this will change not as the countless years speed on;
Ever to the hilltop, looking westward o'er the land
Will come some lad and maiden, dreaming, hand in hand;

In the twilight dreaming of a happy home to be
Beside thy restless waters, sweeping silent toward the sea,
Ever in the gloaming while time shall ebb and flow
Love will build its castles in the crimson afterglow.

28145

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 672 519 6

FRONTIER BALLADS

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON